

Kevin Stitt

John Kevin Stitt (born December 28, 1972)^{[2][3]} is an American businessman and politician who has served as the governor of Oklahoma since January 2019. He founded and is a former chairman and CEO of Gateway Mortgage Group. A Republican, he was elected governor in 2018. Stitt grew up in Norman, Oklahoma, and graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in accounting. He and his wife, Sarah, have six children. A member of the Cherokee Nation, Stitt is the second Native American to serve as governor of Oklahoma, after Johnston Murray.

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Kevin Stitt



28th Governor of Oklahoma

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 14, 2019

Lieutenant Matt Pinnell

Preceded by Mary Fallin

Personal details

Born John Kevin Stitt
December 28, 1972
Milton, Florida, U.S.

Political party Republican

Spouse(s) Sarah Hazen (m. 1998)
^[1]

Children 6

Residence Governor's Mansion

Education Oklahoma State University–Stillwater
(BS)

External links

Early life

Stitt was born in Milton, Florida, and spent his early years in Wayne, Oklahoma. He later moved to Norman, where his father was the pastor of Riverside Church. He graduated from Norman High School^[4] and from Oklahoma State University with a degree in accounting. Stitt helped pay his way through college by selling educational products door-to-door with Southwestern Advantage. He was the first person in the company's 115-year history to achieve the top sales as a first-year salesperson.^[4] Stitt is a member of the Gamma Lambda chapter of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity.

Financial services career

Stitt worked in the financial services sector before starting Gateway in 2000.^[5] He founded the company and was president and CEO until January 2014, when he became chairman-CEO. Stitt has said he started Gateway in 2000 with "\$1,000 and a computer." His first obstacle was to get approved as a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) lender, for which the company needed a net worth of \$50,000. To achieve that, Stitt put forward the equity in his home. In 2002, Gateway secured its first warehouse line, began obtaining licensing in states other than Oklahoma, and started recruiting loan officers. By 2006, it had over 400 employees.

In August 2018, Stitt stepped down as CEO and handed the reins to Stephen Curry,^[6] while remaining chairman.^[7] Gateway is a midsized company based in Jenks, Oklahoma. It employs more than 1,200 people and originates mortgages in 41 states.^[8]

Gateway's legal issues

In 2009, Gateway was listed in a *Business Insider* article as one of the 15 shadiest lenders in the government-backed mortgage industry.^{[9][10]} According to the article, the company originated nearly twice as many bad mortgages as its competitors.^[10] An August 19, 2018, *Oklahoman* newspaper article highlighted the *Business Insider* article's inaccuracies, reporting that "in the Illinois case, a consent order states that the Illinois banking agency investigated a Gateway loan originator for an 'alleged real estate, appraisal, and mortgage fraud scheme.' Gateway fired the employee, asked for a hearing and then agreed to what investigators found. Gateway agreed to a \$10,000 fine. ... Stitt campaign spokeswoman Donelle Harder said the license in Illinois was never revoked. The state agreed after the appeal not to revoke the license, she said."^[11]

NEWS9 also said that according to Georgia's Department of Banking and Finance, Stitt was banned for five years and the company was banned for life from origination mortgages in Georgia.^[12] According to the *Oklahoman*, a Gateway corporate attorney said there were misrepresentations and insufficient background checks by employees in the Georgia office but Stitt was not involved. The employees were fired and Gateway paid a \$2,000 fine. The state overturned the lifetime ban on Gateway, effective November 2017. Gateway is able to do business in all 50 states.^[11]

During Stitt's gubernatorial campaign, Oklahoma Watch reported that Wisconsin regulators fined Gateway for a "clerical error" regarding its history with regulators from other states. Gateway corrected the application and was issued a license in 2009. It remains in good standing in Wisconsin.^[13]

2018 Oklahoma gubernatorial campaign

In July 2017, Stitt announced his candidacy^{[14][15][16][17]} for the Republican nomination^{[18][19]} for governor in 2018.^{[20][21]} Facing nine other candidates in the primary election, he ran a statewide campaign with stops in nearly every city and town. He finished second, defeating, among others, Lieutenant Governor Todd Lamb.^{[22][23]} In the August 28 primary runoff, Stitt defeated Mick Cornett, a former mayor of Oklahoma City.^[24] In the November general election, Stitt defeated the Democratic nominee, former Attorney General Drew Edmondson, and Libertarian Chris Powell.^[25]

In the GOP runoff, Stitt received crucial support from a trio of conservative leaders as U.S. Senator Ted Cruz^[26] and former U.S. Senators Rick Santorum^[27] and Tom Coburn endorsed him.^[28] In the general election, Stitt was endorsed by former primary rival Mick Cornett.^[29] The incumbent governor of Oklahoma, Mary Fallin,^[30] and President Donald Trump.^[31] The *Oklahoman* reported that the Stitt campaign rejected Fallin's endorsement: "'We did not seek [Fallin's endorsement], and Kevin Stitt has run on a campaign message that he will do things a lot differently,' said Donelle Harder, spokeswoman for the Stitt campaign. 'He is focused on changing the structure of state government and cleaning up the mess we are currently in at the Capitol.'"^[29]

During his campaign, Stitt called himself "the only job creator with proven business experience" running for governor^[32] and emphasized his business background.^[33] He called on the state to become "top 10 in job growth, top 10 in education and top 10 in infrastructure."^[34]

During the general election, the close race drew increased attention from national media and political figures.^[35] Vice President Mike Pence campaigned for Stitt.^{[36][37][38]}

Governor of Oklahoma

Transition

After the election, transition activities began as Stitt prepared to assume office.^[39] A spokesperson for the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services announced that Stitt would occupy temporary office space in the Capitol, which was under renovation, and not occupy the Governor's Office until early 2020 due to the restoration project. Stitt also announced that he would not immediately move his family into the Oklahoma Governor's Mansion in Oklahoma City, instead remaining in Jenks until summer 2019 to allow his daughter to graduate from high school.^[39]



Stitt (left) attending a White House conference in December 2018, seated next to Governor-elect Brad Little of Idaho.

Inauguration

Stitt was inaugurated on January 14, 2019, at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Chief Justice of Oklahoma Noma Gurich swore him and Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell into office. Stitt then gave a 15-minute inaugural address.^[40]

Administration personnel

Cabinet positions

The Cabinet of Governor Kevin Stitt
(2019–present)

Office	Name	Term
Governor	Kevin Stitt	2019–present
Lieutenant Governor	<u>Matt Pinnell</u>	2019–present
Chief Operating Officer/Secretary of Agency Accountability	John Budd	2019–present
Secretary of State	<u>Michael Rogers</u>	2019–present
Secretary of Energy and Environment	Kenneth Wagner	2019–present
Secretary of Agriculture	<u>Blayne Arthur</u>	2019–present
Secretary of Transportation	Tim Gatz	2019–present
Secretary of Public Safety	Chip Keating	2019–present
Secretary of the Budget	<u>Mike Mazzei</u>	2019–present
Secretary of Commerce and Workforce Development	<u>Sean Kouplen</u>	2019–present
Secretary of Tourism and Branding	<u>Matt Pinnell</u>	2019–present
Secretary of Health and Mental Health	Jerome Loughridge	2019–2020
	Kevin Corbett	2020–present
Secretary of Human Services and Early Childhood Initiatives	Steve Buck	2019–2020
	Justin Brown	2020–present
Secretary of Science and Innovation	Kayse Shrum	2019–2020
	Elizabeth Pollard	2020–present
Secretary of Native American Affairs	<u>Lisa Johnson Billy</u>	2019–2019
	Michael Rogers	2020–present
Secretary of Digital Transformation and Administration	David Ostrowe	2019–present
Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Military	Ben Robinson	2019–present
Secretary of Education	<u>Michael Rogers</u>	2019–2020
	Ryan Walters	2020–present
Chief of Staff	Michael Junk	2019–2020
	Bond Payne	2020–present
General Counsel	Mark Burget	2019–present
Adjutant General	<u>Michael C. Thompson</u>	2019–present

Before taking office, Stitt nominated former state Representative Michael Rogers as his Secretary of State and Tulsa Deputy Mayor Michael Junk (a former advisor to U.S. Senators Jim Inhofe and Tom Coburn)^[41] as his chief of staff.^[42] He nominated Kenneth Wagner (a former senior advisor to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt) to serve as Secretary of Energy and Environment^[43] and Blayne Arthur (a former deputy secretary for the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry) as Secretary of Agriculture.^[44] Stitt retained several Fallin administration officials, including Major General Michael C. Thompson as Adjutant General and Rusty Rhoades as Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.^[45] In December 2018, Stitt announced that he would restructure the cabinet, eliminating the Secretary of Finance position and replacing it with three new positions splitting the former duties of the office: a Secretary of Budget, a Secretary of Agency Accountability, and a Secretary of Digital Transformation and Administration. Stitt nominated former longtime State Senator Mike Mazzei as Budget Secretary.^[46]

In January 2019, Stitt nominated Tulsa banker Sean Kouplen as Secretary of Commerce and Workforce Development,^[47] executive director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority Tim Gatz^[48] as Secretary of Transportation, and David Ostrowe as Secretary of Digital Transformation and Administration.^[49] He

appointed Pinnell as his Secretary of Tourism and Branding, overseeing the Department of Tourism and Recreation, and as senior advisor for the Commerce Department overseeing investment into Oklahoma's federally approved opportunity zones.^[50] Stitt also named former Oklahoma State Representative Lisa Johnson Billy, a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, to the new position of Secretary of Native American Affairs, serving as the liaison between the Stitt administration and Oklahoma's 38 federally recognized Indian tribes.^[51] He chose John Budd, a former Boston Consulting Group partner and corporate executive at Sonic Drive-In, to serve as the Oklahoma's first Chief Operating Officer.^[52]

In February 2019, Stitt appointed former Oklahoma Highway Patrol trooper Chip Keating, the son of former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, as his Oklahoma Secretary of Public Safety.^[53] Stitt retained Fallin's Director of the Office of Juvenile Affairs, Steven Buck, as his Secretary of Human Services and Early Childhood Development.^[54] Brian Brurud, a former United States Navy fighter pilot, was named Secretary of Veterans Affairs, but in March 2019 Brurud faced an accusation of violating federal labor law by underpaying veterans at his company^[55] and withdrew his name from consideration.^[56] In April 2019 Stitt picked former United States Air Force Brigadier General Ben Robinson for the post.^[57] He appointed energy executive Jerome Loughridge as Secretary of Health and Mental Health and Kayse Shrum, president of the Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences, as Secretary of Science and Technology in March 2019.^[58]

On December 23, 2019, citing disagreements with Stitt over his handling of negotiations with the state's various Indian tribes about gambling compacts, Billy became the first member of the Stitt's cabinet to resign. A member of the Chickasaw Nation and former Republican state representative, Billy viewed Stitt's negotiation position as one of "unnecessary conflict."^[59]

On February 13, 2020, Buck announced his intention to step down from his position in order to become the head of trade association representing long-term care health providers.^[60] Buck, who served concurrently as executive director of the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs, first became OJA head in 2016 after service at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services before Fallin promoted him to her cabinet in 2017.^[61]

Cabinet confirmation process

Position	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Secretary of State	Mike Rogers	November 27, 2018	General Government	April 23, 2019	44-0-4	[2] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92715.pdf)
Secretary of Education	Mike Rogers	January 24, 2019	General Government	April 23, 2019	44-0-4	[3] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92742.pdf)
	Ryan Walters	September 10, 2020	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			
Secretary of Energy and Environment	Kenneth E. Wagner	November 28, 2018	Energy	May 1, 2019	41-0-7	[4] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92717.pdf)
Secretary of Agriculture	Blayne Arthur	December 13, 2018	Agriculture and Wildlife	February 26, 2019	43-0-5	[5] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92747.pdf)
Adjutant General	Michael C. Thompson	December 14, 2018	Veterans Affairs and Military	May 13, 2019	45-1-2	[6] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92718.pdf)
Secretary of the Budget	Mike Mazzei	December 20, 2018	Appropriations	May 15, 2019	47-1-0	[7] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92744.pdf)
Secretary of Commerce and Workforce Development	Sean P. Kouplen	January 3, 2019	Business, Commerce, and Tourism	April 16, 2019	43-0-5	[8] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92746.pdf)
Secretary of Agency Accountability	John Budd	January 7, 2019	General Government	April 23, 2019	44-0-4	[9] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92745.pdf)
Secretary of Tourism and Branding	Matt Pinnell	January 17, 2019	Business, Commerce, and Tourism	April 23, 2019	46-0-2	[10] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92753.pdf)
Secretary of Digital Transformation and Administration	David Ostrowe	January 18, 2019	General Government	April 23, 2019	44-0-4	[11] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92743.pdf)
Secretary of Transportation	Tim Gatz	January 18, 2019	Transportation	April 23, 2019	45-0-3	[12] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92752.pdf)
Secretary of Native American Affairs	Lisa Johnson Billy	January 30, 2019	General Government	April 23, 2019	44-0-4	[13] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92762.pdf)
Secretary of Human Services	Steven Buck	February 14, 2019	Health and Human Services	May 8, 2019	46-0-2	[14] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92765.pdf)

Position	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Secretary of Public Safety	Chip Keating	February 21, 2019	Public Safety	April 24, 2019	42-0-6	[15] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92772.pdf)
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Brian Brurud	February 21, 2019	<i>Nomination withdrawn March 18, 2019</i>			[16] (https://www.kgou.org/post/law-suit-pending-stitt-nominee-veterans-secretary-withdraws)
	Ben Robinson	April 15, 2019	Veterans Affairs and Military	May 13, 2019	46-0-2	[17] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92889.pdf)
Secretary of Science and Innovation	Kayse Shrum	March 14, 2019	Education	May 2, 2019	44-0-4	[18] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92825.pdf)
	Elizabeth Pollard	June 29, 2020	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			
Secretary of Health	Jerome Loughridge	March 14, 2019	Health and Human Services	May 8, 2019	47-0-1	[19] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92826.pdf)
	Kevin Corbett	June 29, 2020	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			

Sub-Cabinet officials

Office	Agency	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Commissioner	Department of Agriculture	Blayne Arthur	December 13, 2018	Agriculture and Wildlife	February 26, 2019	43-0-5	[20] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92721.pdf)
Director	Department of Commerce	Brent Kisling	January 3, 2019	Business, Commerce, and Tourism	April 16, 2019	43-0-5	[21] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92716.pdf)
Director	Office of Management and Enterprise Services	John Budd	January 7, 2019	General Government	April 23, 2019	46-0-2	[22] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92720.pdf)
		Steven Harpe	January 23, 2020	Senate confirmation pending			[23] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93307.pdf)
Commissioner	Department of Health	Tom Bates	January 14, 2019	Interim basis			[24] (https://www.governor.ok.gov/articles/pres-s-release/s/governor-stitt-lau-nches-new-front-porch)
		Gary Cox	September 12, 2019	Senate confirmation pending			[25] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93102.pdf)
State Chief Information Officer	Office of Management and Enterprise Services	Bo Reese	January 14, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			[26] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/90194.pdf)

Office	Agency	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Executive Director	Department of Veteran Affairs	Donald Moore	February 13, 2020	Senate confirmation not required			[27] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93329.pdf)
		Doug Elliot	January 14, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			
		Joel Kintsel	September 6, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			[28] (https://www.ksw.com/2019/09/06/odva-leader-replaces-replacement-announcement/)
Executive Director	Turnpike Authority	Tim Gatz	January 14, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			
Commissioner	Department of Mental Health	Terri White	January 14, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			
		Carrie Slatton-Hodges	February 1, 2020	Interim basis			
Director of Homeland Security	Department of Public Safety	Kim E. Carter	January 15, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			[29] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92719.pdf)
Director	Department of Emergency Management	Mark Gower	January 29, 2019	Public Safety	April 24, 2019	42-0-6	[30] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92748.pdf)
Commissioner	Department of Public Safety	Rusty Rhoades	February 22, 2019	Public Safety	April 24, 2019	42-0-6	[31] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92779.pdf)
		John Scully	September 2, 2019	Senate confirmation pending			[32] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93095.pdf)

Office	Agency	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Director	Department of Tourism and Recreation	Jerry Winchester	April 2, 2019	Business, Commerce, and Tourism	May 7, 2019	45-0-3	[33] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92850.pdf)
Director	Department of Transportation	Tim Gatz	May 1, 2019	Transportation	May 13, 2019	48-0-0	[34] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92958.pdf)
Director	Office of Juvenile Affairs	Steven Buck	May 1, 2019	Health and Human Services	May 15, 2019	47-0-1	[35] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/92958.pdf)
Director	Department of Human Services	Justin Brown	June 4, 2019	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			[36] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93010.pdf)
Deputy Secretary of Public Safety	Department of Corrections	Tricia Everest	June 13, 2019	<i>Senate confirmation not required</i>			[37] (https://www.governor.ok.gov/articles/presrelease/s/secretary-of-public-safety-and-restoration-task-force)
Director	Department of Corrections	Scott Crow	June 14, 2019 ^[62]	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			[38] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93249.pdf)
Deputy Secretary of Health	Health Care Authority	Carter Kimble	June 21, 2019	<i>Senate confirmation not required</i>			[39] (https://www.governor.ok.gov/articles/presrelease/s/governor-stitt-announces-hiring-of-senior-health)

Office	Agency	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
Secretary	General Land Office	A. Brandt Vawter	July 8, 2019	<i>Interim basis</i>			[40] (https://www.governor.ok.gov/articles/pres-srelease/s/governor-stitt-comments-on-the-selection-of-new)
Director	Health Care Authority	Kevin Corbett	August 5, 2019	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			[41] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/files/93067.pdf)
Director of Workforce Development	Department of Commerce	Don Morris	August 12, 2019	<i>Senate confirmation not required</i>			[42] (https://okcommerce.gov/newswire/workforce-commerce-transition-to-create-collaboration-to-address-workforce-and-economic-development-demands/)
Commissioner	State Banking Department	Mick <u>Thompson</u>	December 10, 2019 ^[63]	<i>Senate confirmation pending</i>			[43] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/files/93257.pdf)
Chief of the Highway Patrol	Department of Public Safety	Michael Harrell	January 14, 2019 ^[64]	<i>Senate confirmation not required</i>			

Office	Agency	Name	Announcement	Senate Committee	Full Senate vote date	Confirmation vote (Yes-No-Absent)	Ref
		Brent Sugg	September 11, 2019	Senate confirmation not required			[44] (https://www.tulsaworld.com/news/departments-of-public-safety-announces-brent-sugg-new-ohp-chief/article_c9453506-c9e5-56be-bc1e-f6b3644cfef2.html)
Director	State Bureau of Investigation	Ricky G. Adams	January 14, 2019 ^[65]	Senate confirmation not required			

Legislative action

Budget and spending

Stitt and the legislature approved the 2020 Oklahoma state budget in May 2019. After years of cuts under the Fallin administration, the budget provided for 5% in additional spending among state agencies over 2019 levels without increasing taxes. Particular areas of increased spending include a teacher pay raise of \$1,220, a state employee pay raise of \$1,400, authorization of two new trooper academies for the Oklahoma Highway Patrol to hire 80 additional state troopers, a 14% pay raise for correctional officers with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the largest investment in the state's Quick Action Closing Fund for job recruitment in state history, increased spending for Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and increased provider rates for physicians, hospitals, and nursing homes from the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. In addition to the increased spending, Stitt demanded depositing \$200 million into the state's reverse fund, increasing its balance to \$1 billion.^[66]

Capital punishment

Oklahoma has a long history with capital punishment, having conducted the third-most executions since the death penalty was reinstated in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976).^[67] But in 2015, a moratorium was placed on all state executions following the botched execution of Clayton Lockett in April 2014 and the execution of Charles Warner by unauthorized methods in January 2015.^[68] A state criminal grand jury concluded in 2016 that state corrections officials failed to follow the law in Warner's execution and should have exercised greater caution given the backdrop of Lockett's execution.^[69] In 2018, Oklahoma Attorney General Michael J. Hunter announced the state would seek to use inert gas asphyxiation by nitrogen for execution if suitable drugs for lethal injection were not found once the moratorium was lifted.^[70]

On February 13, 2020, Stitt, Hunter and Corrections Director Scott Crow announced that the moratorium would be lifted.^[71] Citing a reliable source of necessary drugs, Oklahoma would again use lethal injection as its primary means of execution. Hunter announced that executions would be scheduled for Oklahoma's 48 death row inmates following the exhaustion of their appeal rights.

Criminal justice reform

Beginning with the adoption of State Question 780 by Oklahoma voters in 2016, advocates for criminal justice reform sought additional measures. SQ780, which changed the classification of simple drug possession crimes from felony to misdemeanor and increased the cap for property crimes to be considered felonies, had already reduced the rate of felony prosecution statewide by 26% by 2018.^[72] In May 2019, Stitt proposed several ideas, including making SQ780's sentencing standards retroactive, prohibiting criminal records from being considered for professional licensing, and restructuring the funding scheme for the various district attorney offices.^[73] The legislature made SQ780 retroactive by allowing parole for those convicted before SQ780 became effective and reforming professional licensing,^[74] but did not approve bills to reform Oklahoma's cash bail system.^[75] In response to legislative defeats, Stitt issued an executive order (<https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/executive/1874.pdf>) to form a study group to make recommendations for future criminal justice reform for consideration during the 2020 legislative session, with particular emphasis on reducing Oklahoma's incarceration rate.^[76]

Drug policy

In mid-2018, Oklahoma voters approved State Question 788, which legalized the licensed use, sale, and growth of marijuana for medical purposes. As a candidate, Stitt cited a need to implement the results of the election by enacting a comprehensive regulatory scheme.^[77] After months of negotiation with legislative leaders, Stitt signed HB2612, the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana and Patient Protection Act. Also known as the "Marijuana Unity Bill", HB2612 provided an extensive medical marijuana framework, including licensing requirements and rights for patients.^[78]

Government reform

In his first state of the state address, Stitt called for increased appointment power over major state agencies. The legislature granted his request by adopting five new laws, giving him direct control over the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs, and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.^[79] These agencies were previously under the control of multi-member boards or commissions that acted independently of the governor.

In exchange for additional appointment powers and at legislative leaders' request, Stitt signed into law SB1, which established the Oklahoma Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency in the legislative branch. Under the direction of an oversight committee composed of members of the State Senate and House of Representatives, the office will provide auditing, evaluation, and investigative services for the legislature relating to the governor's proposed budget and expenditures by the executive branch.^[80]

Gun rights

The first law Stitt signed after taking office was HB2597, colloquially called "Constitutional Carry". Effective November 1, 2019, the law permitted anyone 21 or older, or 18 if a member or veteran of the United States Armed Forces, to carry a firearm without obtaining a permit or completing training.^[81] The firearm may be concealed or unconcealed, loaded or unloaded. Stitt also signed HB2010, which expands the places a firearm may be carried to include municipal zoos and parks, regardless of size, as long as it is concealed.^[82]

Healthcare

In 2010, the federal government adopted the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). Under pre-ACA levels, Oklahoma covered non-disabled adults without children with incomes at or below approximately 37% of the federal poverty level (FPL).^[83] The ACA mandated that Oklahoma expand its Medicaid program,

known as SoonerCare and administered by the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, to cover nearly all adults earning up to 138% of the FPL. But in 2012, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *NFIB v. Sebelius* that the mandate was unconstitutional, allowing Oklahoma to continue at its pre-ACA eligibility levels. Following the decision, Governor Fallin rejected the option to expand.^[84] After taking office, Stitt continued Oklahoma's opposition to expansion.^[85] His refusal to expand the program resulted in the filing of an citizens' initiative petition, State Question 802, to enact the expansion into the state constitution notwithstanding Stitt's opposition.

In response to the petition, in January 2020 Stitt unveiled his own proposal to expand the program, "SoonerCare 2.0". With the Trump Administration's blessing, Stitt's proposal would transform the Medicaid program from a formula grant to a block grant.^[86] Key elements of Stitt's plan include introducing work-related requirements for recipients, requiring them to pay some form of monthly premiums, and transition from a fee-for-service model to a managed-care model.

Judicial reform

Stitt signed legislation reorganizing the Oklahoma Supreme Court and the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals. Prior to the reforms, Supreme Court justices were appointed from nine separate districts representing various collections of counties. Under the legislation, as of 2020 the Court's nine judicial districts were redrawn such that five were made coequal with the state's five congressional districts and the other four are at large with the state as whole.^[87] Similarly, the five judicial districts used to appoint judges to the Court of Criminal Appeals were made coequal with the congressional districts. The legislation left the method for appointing appellate judges via the Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission unchanged. The reform's ostensible purpose was to increase the pool of applicants to the appellate courts.

Tribal relations

Under the authority of the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, in 2004 Oklahoma voters approved State Question 712, which adopted the Oklahoma State-Tribal Gaming Act. Under the Act, the State of Oklahoma offers each federally recognized Indian tribe the right to conduct commercial gambling within its territory upon accepting the terms of a uniform state-tribal gaming compact. The compact allowed the compacting tribes to conduct gaming in return for "exclusivity fees" to the state treasury averaging 6% of gaming revenues.^[88] The compact was scheduled to automatically renew on January 1, 2020.

In a July 2019 op-ed in the Tulsa World followed by a letter to the chiefs of 35 Oklahoma tribes, Stitt called on tribal leaders to renegotiate the terms of the compact before its expiration date.^[89] In particular, he called for increasing the exclusivity fees to between 13% and 25%.^[90] Stitt's office maintained the compact is not subject to automatic renewal, a claim the tribes rejected, believing it will continue indefinitely unless changes are mutually agreed upon.^{[91][92]} In either event, the Oklahoma Legislature would presumably have to be involved in any renegotiation, since the state's compact offer is defined and controlled by state statute, and federal law requires that the United States Department of the Interior approve any new compact terms.^[93]

In August 2019, the various tribes refused to meet with Stitt to negotiate the amount of the exclusivity fees unless he conceded that the compact would otherwise automatically renew.^[94] Stitt had proposed a September 3 date to begin discussions but the tribes rejected it.

At the end of December 2019, the Choctaw, Cherokee, and Chickasaw tribes filed suit in the United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma to end the dispute over the compact.^[95] On December 31, Stitt signed an extension to the hunting and fishing license compact with the Choctaw Nation, a previous point of contention.^[96]

On July 28, 2020, U.S. District Judge Timothy DeGiusti ruled in the tribes' favor, holding that their compacts with the state automatically renewed for an additional 15-year term on January 1, 2020. A week earlier, on July 21, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that the new gaming compacts signed by the state and the Comanche Nation and the Otoe-Missouria Tribe are invalid under state law. The Court ruled that Stitt "exceeded his authorities" in entering into the compacts because they would have allowed gaming that is illegal in Oklahoma, like sports betting.^[97]

Other positions

Stitt received a 100% score from the pro-life advocacy group Oklahomans for Life.^[98]

During his campaign for governor, Stitt said that he would defend Oklahomans' constitutional right to bear arms, writing: "I don't believe in punishing law-abiding gun owners for the atrocious and illegal actions of an individual."^[99]

Response to coronavirus outbreak

In March 2020, Stitt went out to restaurants amid the coronavirus pandemic and posted a photo on Twitter of him doing so with his two children.^{[100][101]} He later deleted the tweet, and his spokesperson said, "the governor will continue to take his family out to dinner and to the grocery store without living in fear and encourages Oklahomans to do the same."^[102] President Trump said he did not advocate going out to eat but did not criticize Stitt.^[103] In the tweet, Stitt wrote, "Eating with my kids and all my fellow Oklahomans ... It's packed tonight!" The photograph he posted with his kids showed them smiling while surrounded by restaurant patrons.^[104] On June 20, Stitt attended the Trump rally in Tulsa, and was seen without wearing a mask.^[105] On July 15, Stitt announced that he had tested positive for COVID-19.^[106] He is the first United States governor diagnosed with COVID-19.^[107]

Judicial appointments

The governor of Oklahoma is responsible for making appointments to Oklahoma state courts upon a vacancy. Candidates for appointment are reviewed by the Oklahoma Judicial Nominating Commission, which forwards three names to the governor. The governor appoints one of the three without further confirmation.

Appellate courts

#	Judge	Position	Court	District	Former Judge	Appointment date	End of service	Successor Judge	Ref.
1	<u>M. John Kane IV</u>	Justice	<u>Supreme Court</u>	1st	<u>John F. Reif</u>	September 17, 2019	Incumbent	Incumbent	[45] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93109.pdf)
2	<u>Dustin Rowe</u>	Justice	<u>Supreme Court</u>	2nd	<u>Patrick Wyrick</u>	November 18, 2019	Incumbent	Incumbent	[46] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93229.pdf)
3	<u>Trevor Pemberton</u>	Judge	<u>Civil Appeals</u>	4st	<u>Larry Joplin</u>	August 24, 2020	Incumbent	Incumbent	[47] (https://www.sos.ok.gov/documents/filelog/93660.pdf)
4	TBD	Judge	<u>Civil Appeals</u>	1st	<u>Jerry L. Goodman</u>	TBD			

Trial courts

#	Judge	Position	County	District	Former Judge	Appointment date	End of service	Successor Judge	Ref.
1	Christine Larson	Associate District Judge	<u>Cimarron</u>	1st	Ronald L. Kincannon	March 8, 2019	Incumbent	Incumbent	[48] (https://www.os.ok.gov/documents/files/elo/92799.pdf)
2	Timothy King	District Judge	<u>Muskogee</u>	15th	Mike Norman	November 4, 2019	Incumbent	Incumbent	[49] (https://www.os.ok.gov/documents/files/elo/93210.pdf)
3	Laura Farris	Associate District Judge	<u>Creek</u>	24th	Mark Ihrig	January 17, 2020	Incumbent	Incumbent	[50] (https://www.os.ok.gov/documents/files/elo/93302.pdf)

#	Judge	Position	County	District	Former Judge	Appointment date	End of service	Successor Judge	Ref.
4	Stinson Shelia	District Judge	<u>Oklahoma</u>	7th	Lisa Davis	July 17, 2020	Incumbent	Incumbent	^[51] (https://www.governor.ok.gov/articles/press-rel/eases/governor-stitt-appoints-oklahomacounty-district)
5	TBD	Associate District Judge	<u>Woodward</u>	4th	Don Work	TBD			
6	TBD	Judge	Workers Compensation Court	N/A		TBD			
7	TBD	District Judge	<u>Osage</u>	10th	<u>M. John Kane IV</u>	TBD			
8	TBD	District Judge	<u>Tulsa</u>	14th		TBD			
9	TBD	District Judge	<u>Tulsa</u>	14th		TBD			
10	TBD	Associate District Judge	<u>Cleveland</u>	21st	Bonner Stephen W.	TBD			

Personal life

Stitt is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation as a descendant of his great-grandfather, Robert Benton Dawson. Dawson was given land in the Skiatook area because of his tribal citizenship, and the land is still in the family, now owned by an uncle of Stitt's.^[4] Stitt's maternal grandparents were dairy farmers in Skiatook. His paternal grandfather was the head veterinarian at the Oklahoma City Stockyards.^[108]

Stitt married Sarah Hazen in 1998 and they have six children. The Stitts are active in their church in Tulsa, Woodlake Church.^[109]

Electoral history

June 26, 2018 Republican gubernatorial primary ^[110]				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	Republican	Mick Cornett	132,806	29.3
	Republican	Kevin Stitt	110,479	24.4
	<u>Republican</u>	Todd Lamb	107,985	23.9
	<u>Republican</u>	Dan Fisher	35,818	7.9
	<u>Republican</u>	Gary Jones	25,243	5.6
	<u>Republican</u>	Gary Richardson	18,185	4.0
	<u>Republican</u>	Blake Stephens	12,211	2.7
	<u>Republican</u>	Christopher Barnett	5,240	1.2
	<u>Republican</u>	Barry Gowdy	2,347	0.5
	<u>Republican</u>	Eric Foutch	2,292	0.5
Total votes			452,606	100.0

August 28, 2018 Republican gubernatorial primary runoff ^[111]				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	Republican	Kevin Stitt	164,892	54.56
	<u>Republican</u>	Mick Cornett	137,316	45.44
Total votes			302,208	100.0

2018 Oklahoma gubernatorial election				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	Republican	Kevin Stitt	644,579	54.33%
	<u>Democratic</u>	Drew Edmondson	500,973	42.23%
	<u>Libertarian</u>	Chris Powell	40,833	3.44%
Total votes			1,186,385	100.0%
	Republican hold			

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External links

- [Governor Kevin Stitt \(https://www.governor.ok.gov/\)](https://www.governor.ok.gov/) official government website
- [Kevin Stitt \(https://ballotpedia.org/Kevin_Stitt\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Kevin_Stitt) at Ballotpedia
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?kevinstitt\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?kevinstitt) on C-SPAN
- [Kevin Stitt \(https://www.ontheissues.org/Kevin_Stitt.htm\)](https://www.ontheissues.org/Kevin_Stitt.htm) at On the Issues
-
- [Profile \(https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/180027\)](https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/180027) at Vote Smart

Party political offices		
Preceded by <u>Mary Fallin</u>	<u>Republican nominee for Governor of Oklahoma</u> 2018	Incumbent
Political offices		
Preceded by <u>Mary Fallin</u>	<u>Governor of Oklahoma</u> 2019–present	Incumbent
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by <u>Mike Pence</u> <i>as <u>Vice President</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Within Oklahoma	Succeeded by <u>Mayor of city</u> in which event is held
		Succeeded by <u>Otherwise Nancy Pelosi</u> <i>as <u>Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</u></i>
Preceded by <u>Gary Herbert</u> <i>as <u>Governor of Utah</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Outside Oklahoma	Succeeded by <u>Michelle Lujan Grisham</u> <i>as <u>Governor of New Mexico</u></i>

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